Use of TED Talks Resources for Improving the Foreign Language Speaking Skills of Higher Education Students of the Specialty 013 Primary Education

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# USE OF TED TALKS RESOURCES FOR IMPROVING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING SKILLS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS OF THE SPECIALTY 013 PRIMARY EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the development of the pedagogical conditions for increasing the level of undergraduates' foreign language speaking skills for programme subject area -013 Primary Education through authentic videos provided by the open educational resource of TED Talks during both English classroom activities and undergraduate's independent work.

The research aims to identify the algorithm of application of this resource on the basis of available manuals, articles and personal experience. The objectives of the study include issues related to the relevance of using this content, the criteria for selecting TED Talks videos depending on the undergraduate's level of a foreign language, the duration of the speech, as well as building positions by a teacher that support the process of learning a topic with TED Talks resources.

The study identified factors to improve the quality of foreign language education within TED Talks resources, namely: increasing the motivation of students to learn English; expanding the amount of lexical and grammatical materials; development of almost all skills and abilities of foreign communication (from grammar and vocabulary to skills of critical comprehension of information); a factor of availability of wide opportunities for independent learning material and self-education, student educational and cognitive competence, etc. The study created optimal conditions for the formation of undergraduates' skills of independent work and increase their motivation to learn English, which allowed intensifying the process of learning a foreign language and improving its effectiveness. The benefits of using TED Talks videos are defined (observation of authentic foreign language speech; application of the "Shadowing" technique; vocabulary enrichment; practice writing skills; eliminating gaps in foreign language skills; learning non-verbal means of communication for constructive transfer of information.

The results of the study and the authors' conclusions can be used to develop teaching materials based on TED Talks resources, and contain techniques and tasks aimed at classroom activities and extracurricular independent work.

Key words: bachelor's degree; foreign language speaking skills; motivation; independent

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work; national education system; TED Talks resources.

Introduction. Taking into account full-time and mixed forms of education, we should also emphasize the importance of available educational Internet resources that can be used by a modern teacher during the organization of a full-fledged educational process for learning a foreign language in Ukrainian higher education institutions both in classroom activities and for students' independent work. Online resources currently offer a huge amount of authentic materials and inspire Ukrainian teachers to create original classes that can motivate students and serve as a basis for building a successful career. So, the TED Talks video hosting is also of a great value for teaching English especially within remote learning. Recently, materials of TED Talks are widely used for educational purposes around the world due to modern topics, inspiring ideas and their accessibility. Foreign researchers note the distinctive features of TED Talks resources, which give a new way to the learning process:

- 1. In changing educational environment TED conferences provide access to a relevant content of different fields of knowledge and perform the function of spreading valuable and unique ideas. Such videos are able to motivate students and encourage them to study new topics, arousing interest to lifelong learning, for new knowledge, personal growth, the desire for new experience, etc. (Takaesu, 2013).
- 2. These speeches are analyzed from the point of discursive analysis and defined as a new popularizing hybrid genre, which occupies an intermediate position between the university lecture, presentation for the conference and documentary.
- 3. TED Talks lectures provide a wide field for rhetorical analysis, allow you to answer the question of how communication is achieved, what presentation skills are used by the speaker in a given speech (Baeva, 2017: 129).

Since 2014, the interest in TED Talks resources increased significantly, leading to the publication of a number of English language textbooks in collaboration with National Geographic Learning. One of the latest textbook is "Perspectives". This edition contains tasks and exercises for video lectures, as well as texts on related topics, and all materials are adapted to the stated level of complexity (A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) (Smith & Turner, 2016). Authors of these textbooks offer learning both British English (BrE) and American English (AmE).

It's hard to overestimate the benefits of TED Talks videos. Learners who study English are spectators of the daily lives of real people, have the opportunity to travel around the world, learning about different cultures and living English. Topics of lectures are different – from medicine and philosophy to art and modern technologies. Thus, watching these videos encourages students to learn. All this serves as an emotional and motivational step to the processing of the given information, its

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evaluation with further discussion (Hashimoto, Fukuda & Okazaki, 2015: 230–233).

TED Talks is an acronym for Technology Entertainment Design, a private nonprofit foundation in the USA that has held conferences since 1984. First, face-to-face presentations were limited by the mentioned three fields. In recent years, the resource has significantly expanded its borders and focused on science, business, art and global issues (MacSuga-Gage, Simonsen, Briere, 2012: 15–16). In 2007, TED Talks underwent changes and today has provided instant access to modern concepts, shaping public opinion and uniting professionals from many fields who want to recognize the world better. At present time (January, 2023), the site has about four thousand performances exciting the imagination. These TED Talks lectures (for speakers English is both native and non-native) are available with English transcripts and subtitles in more than forty languages.

It is noted that in the last two decades, modern experts in the field of foreign language teaching see the importance of acquainting students with authentic materials. First, they are easily accessible to students and are an accurate example of how the language is used by native speakers or people for whom English is not native. Secondly, foreign language words and expressions are used in natural conditions, so learners deal with living language. When students meet similar situations in life, they will be more likely to achieve success in informal communication. Third, such materials are informal, socially oriented and widespread (Fed, 2020). In this regard, TED Talks lectures can be considered authentic because speakers do not just read a script written for them by someone, as it is often the case with non-authentic texts, but share with the audience personal experiences, compelling ideas, desires and hopes. As English is used in various fields – business, science – these possible communication situations are as close as possible to life.

Thus, watching TED Talks conferences gives learners the opportunity to hear people who speak English with different accents (French, Italian). This fact can give more confidence to those who are learning English and give the realization that they should not worry or be afraid to speak it imperfectly (Taibi, Chawla, Dietze, Marenzi, & Fetahu, 2015: 1094).

Research aims. The article considers the possibilities of using TED Talks resources as an additional content material for learning English during both English classroom activities and student's independent work in a higher education institution. The research aim to identify the algorithm of application of this resource on the basis of available manuals, articles and personal experience. The objectives of the study include issues related to the relevance of using this content, the criteria for selecting TED Talks videos depending on the student's level of a foreign language, the duration

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of the speech, as well as building positions by a teacher that support the process of learning a topic with TED Talks resources.

**Research methods.** Research methods are determined by the outlined aim and objectives. Analysis and generalization are used to study the theoretical material of the outlined problem. Modeling helps to build a model of implementing TED Talks resources into the undergraduates' educational process in English classes.

The Main Material. It is known that in the context of modern education, a teacher becomes an active participant in the process of cognition, which provides a meaningful turn, and competent support of the educational process depends on him/her. Therefore, the use of TED Talks resources requires the selection of criteria and a specific algorithm for the organization of training. Thus, the choice of the appropriate speech from the available list will depend on the students' speech level and learning goals. It is possible that a teacher determines by himself/herself the complexity of the video for students, taking into account their listening skills. In addition, the level of complexity of a TED Talks lecture can be influenced by its lexical content. It is noted that the duration of the lecture plays an important role in the perception and understanding of the learning material. At the initial stage of training, when the topic is not quite familiar (or discovered from another point of view), the speech may cause some difficulties, so learners have to listen twice (it is desirable to choose speeches lasting less than six minutes). Most teachers use TED Talks resources to watch videos, but this is not limited to adapting scripts for additional reading within a certain topic.

Thanks to observation of the undergraduates' educational process, a number of general problems were identified that needed some correction: low students' activity in learning English; lack of interest in success of learning English; inability to absorb new foreign language vocabulary, which led to incapability to perform communication; lack of positive attitude to learning activities in English, etc.

It is believed that the identified problems are due to the use in the educational process of undergraduates the traditional approach to learning a foreign language, which has a number of disadvantages: learning is reduced to the render of ready-made knowledge; focus on the "average" student in the pace of study and the amount of knowledge; disregard for students' individual psychological characteristics; a great strain on students' memory, etc. Therefore, we should look for ways to improve the effectiveness of foreign language learning through new traditional methods, using intensive techniques, individualization, differentiation of learning, focus on personality-oriented learning (Fed, 2019; Lobachova, 2017).

In our opinion, for the effective formation and further development of undergraduates' speaking skills in English classes it is necessary to create didactic

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conditions for successful undergraduates' foreign language training. It is believed that it would be better to implement TED Talks resources in the educational process of bachelor degree students to interest in learning a foreign language and motivate to use it in life situations of communication. Using this type of resource in classes in Ukrainian higher education institutions provides wide opportunities for intensifying the educational process (Lobachova, 2020).

It is noted that the algorithm for working with TED Talks videos involves three stages including the creation of a series of language exercises related to the content of the lecture, which will be the basis for the absorbing new information:

- 1. **Pre-demonstration.** In order to develop listening or reading skills, the focus of the task before watching the video or reading the text should be aimed at activating the students' knowledge and working with vocabulary that will provide understanding of the material. Students show interest in the topic and prepare for its perception by discussing general issues, anticipating the content of the lecture based on photography, reading a short speaker's biography and subsequent answers to questions about his values and ideas. To learn the new vocabulary, a teacher can give students a list of words with definitions, or do a task to match the lexical unit (or expression) with its definition, or choose synonyms for active vocabulary. It is recommended to use the second variant, because it does not give ready-made answers, but makes students think, develops mental abilities.
- 2. **Demonstration.** This stage involves summarizing the content of the lecture in various forms. Students write down the basic data, facts, ideas related to the content of the lecture. To focus on important key ideas, a teacher should choose appropriate questions that provide an answer, for example, in the form of a statement true/false (right/wrong). It is considered that the exercises to fill in the blanks are relevant if students master a language at least on the intermediate level. Thus, a teacher, indicating the time intervals of a video, asks students to fill in the blanks in the sentences. To create similar tasks, a teacher can use the test generator, which allows him to make tests to fill the gaps in cloze tests (Rubenstein, 2012: 264).
- III. **Post-demonstration.** At the final stage of the work there is a discussion on the given issues. It can be performed both in oral and written forms as homework. Sites (ed.ted.com/lessons, tedxesl.com) can provide invaluable help in organizing such discussions. On the first site you can find additional materials on the topic. So, to prepare well for the upcoming discussion, you should use texts or videos from the category Dig dipper. An alternative one to the usual discussion can be a group discussion, which revolves around a topical issue according to the following rules: before watching a video in class, two or three students are given the task to read the

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lecture at home, if necessary, they can use scripts and additional materials. Thus, these students are appointed as experts on this topic. After watching the video, the rest of the students should ask them 2–3 questions on this issue (Scotto di Carlo, 2015).

Given the argumentative and compelling nature of TED Talks resources, a teacher may offer undergraduates to look at the problem from another view or to think in a written form on the nature of a phenomenon. At this stage, a teacher can draw students' attention to the peculiarities of the presentation by the speaker, and what makes the speech exciting and convincing. Important parameters can be body language and gestures, voice, accent, sense of humor, use of informative slides or presentation style.

The methodological aspects of using TED Talks videos to teach undergraduates English are outlined:

- 1. Watch the full video and answer the following questions: what is this speech about? What is the main idea of the speech? Do you agree with the speaker?
- 2. Re-watch the video, but with English subtitles, which will help better immersion in a foreign language environment. Subtitles in a native language can be used only in case of complete misunderstanding of the material.
- 3. Work on the lexical content of the video to understand each phrase and lexical items fully used by the speaker. Using a dictionary write unknown words (phrases) with examples from the video and choose own one's.
- 4. While re-watching the video, learners imitate the pronunciation and rhythm of the speaker's speech. If students cannot do it aloud, they can imitate the movement of the articulatory apparatus.
  - 5. Listen and imitate the pronunciation looking at the English subtitles.
  - 6. Read aloud the text of the video, imitating the speaker's manner by memory.
- 7. Pronounce the learned foreign language material by oneself with a complete imitation of the speaker.

It is noted that a teacher can offer the following plan for working with TED Talks videos to improve undergraduates' foreign language speaking skills during their independent work: the TED Talks video "Let's Teach for Mastery – not Test Scores" by Sal Khan (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MTRxRO5SRA&t=412s) was divided into 3 fragments (fragment 1, fragment 2, fragment 3) and it was offered to apply to them various techniques:

- 1. Listen and imitate pronunciation (Technique 1).
- 2. Listen and imitate pronunciation looking at subtitles (Technique 2).
- 3. Read aloud imitating by memory (Technique 3).
- 4. Pronounce the learned foreign language material by oneself with a complete

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imitation of the speaker (Technique 4).

- **Day 1.** Watch the full video. Make a complete lexical analysis of the foreign language material.
  - Day 2. Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 1.
- **Day 3.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 2. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 1.
- **Day 4.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 3. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 2. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 1.
- **Day 5.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 4. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 3. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 2.
- **Day 6.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 1. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 4. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 3.
- **Day 7.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 2. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 1. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 1.
- **Day 8.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 3. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 2. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 2.
- **Day 9.** Work with the fragment 1, using the technique 4. Work with the fragment 2, using the technique 3. Work with the fragment 3, using the technique 2.

So, from the 6th to the 9th day is a full cycle of training concerning one fragment of the TED Talk video. Undergraduates should repeat such cycles several times, until they began to understand fragments 1, 2, 3 auditory for 100 % without the help of subtitles.

This class plan created the conditions for periodic repetition of the studied foreign language material and became an important basis for successful mastery of English. In addition, students repeated periodically the learned material between cycles. The repetition of the learned material performed with increasing a time interval. For example, if it is presented in days: 1, 3, 7, 14, 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, etc. In the experimental group, the frequency of repetitions of the learned texts depended on cycles. For example, the first repetition performed after 2 cycles, the second – after 4 cycles, the third – 8 cycles, the fourth – 16 cycles, etc. Within this plan of work there was a really deep study of a language due to its introduction into the student subconscious.

It is found out that each time, immersing into a foreign language, undergraduates learn it on a new (deeper) level:

- 1. At the level of physiology. Listening and repeating new sounds, a student gets used to them; tries to distinguish individual sound positions, words, and expressions.
  - 2. At the level of understanding the general meaning. Learning begins at this

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stage. Understanding language, the brain learns it.

- 3. At the level of clarification of details and connection of the meaning of what is heard with the text. Students recognize words and sounds which were not previously noticeable in the flow of speech; clarify the nuances of pronunciation.
- 4. At the level of conscious analysis. Students, not being limited by the rhythm of the audio, concentrate by themselves on the moments they are interested in, which allow them to deal with the details at a comfortable pace. At this stage there is understanding of the new grammar.
- 5. At the level of motility. Students learn to write, gain language skills in a completely different way (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

By learning a foreign language in such way, students receive a huge amount of information that they are not physically able to learn by themselves.

So, the benefits of using TED Talks videos are defined:

- 1. Observation of authentic foreign language speech. Being able to hear authentic foreign language speech enhances learning results. With the help of videos presented on the web resource ted.com, students can improve their pronunciation, because it is more interesting and effective to listen on the basis of original materials, rather than voiced by fellow speakers (non-native English speakers may have certain problems: incorrect pronunciation of certain sounds (most often vowels), the rhythm of speech, which is inherent in their native language, not English, etc.) (Gilmore, 2007: 100; Goodwin: 2014).
- 2. Application of the "Shadowing" technique. The basis of the Shadowing method is to listen to the audio recording and repeat it aloud as close as possible to the original. This allows you to develop the skills of speech perception auditory, to learn the grammar of the language intuitively, subconsciously, without studying in textbooks; associate the sound image of the word with its spelling; acquire skills of fluency in a language. As you can see, simple imitation is becoming one of the most effective methods of learning a foreign language. At the same time, auditory perception, reading, spelling, speed, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar are trained (Lobachova, 2020).
- 3. Vocabulary enrichment. By carefully reviewing and analyzing small videos presented on the ted.com website, it is possible to increase students' vocabulary, as lexical items are best remembered in a context. In addition, TED Talks videos help to supplement your knowledge with new grammar templates that are most often used in English.
- 4. Practice writing skills. On the basis of TED Talks videos, you can improve your spelling skills. It is possible by rewriting subtitles. It is proved that mechanical

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memory improves significantly memorization. If this type of activity is too simple for a student, then rewriting can be combined with listening: a phrase heard several times, said by a native speaker from the video, is recommended to record as heard.

- 5. Eliminating gaps in foreign language skills. While watching the video, you may find that a student has heard all the words except the structural parts of speech, so you should pay attention to videos on the study of sound fusion, etc.
- 6. Learning non-verbal means of communication for constructive transfer of information. TED Talks videos help to master non-verbal communication techniques. Observing regularly the gestures and facial expressions of outstanding foreign speakers, students, without noticing it, adopt various gestures, the use of which is appropriate during a certain thematic presentation in English (Lobachova, 2019: 99).

Conclusions. The theoretical and practical conclusions show that the defined and theoretically substantiated pedagogical conditions of using TED Talks videos contribute to the development and improvement of undergraduates' foreign language speaking skills. The effectiveness of the open educational TED Talks resource as a tool to increase the level of foreign language training of undergraduates in higher education institution is proved. It is determined that the use of the modern media content of TED Talks can improve the quality of education through the following factors:

- Increasing the undergraduates' motivation to learn English;
- Significant expansion of the amount of lexical and grammatical materials offered within a particular topic, in addition to educational materials that are already used;
- Development of almost all skills and abilities of foreign language communication: knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, listening skills, discussion, critical thinking of information that is necessary for communication in the modern world;
- Correct formation of undergraduates' phonetic skills and correct English pronunciation;
- Availability of opportunities for independent repetition of the material and self-education, educational and cognitive competence of the student, etc.

It is substantiated that the use of TED Talks resources allows to solve effectively the problem of immersion in the speech environment during both English classroom activities and undergraduates' independent work, as well as to increase the pace of introduction of a new lexical material and its amount. TED Talks resources are convenient bases for various educational projects due to their accessibility, ease of using, wide search; choose of the necessary content and individual planning of time spent on training.

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In general, innovative ways in the educational system, used by teachers, are oriented to find new solutions to problem situations and to optimize the learning process, provide the organization of favorable conditions for learning and the permanent improvement of the foreign language education quality.

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# ВИКОРИСТАННЯ TED TALKS РЕСУРСІВ У ВДОСКОНАЛЕННІ ІНШОМОВНОЇ МОВЛЕННЄВОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ 013 ПОЧАТКОВА ОСВІТА

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Анотація. У статті досліджено проблему використання TED Talks ресурсів у вдосконаленні іншомовної мовленнєвої компетентності здобувачів вищої освіти спеціальності 013 Початкова освіта. Подано педагогічні умови для підвищення рівня іншомовної мовленнєвої компетентності здобувачів бакалаврського рівня вищої освіти із застосуванням автентичних відеоматеріалів відкритого освітнього ресурсу TED Talks як під час аудиторних занять з англійської мови, так і самостійної роботи здобувачів.

Дослідження спрямоване на визначення алгоритму застосування TED Talks ресурсів на основі наявних методичних матеріалів, статей та особистого практичного досвіду авторів. У статті досліджено питання, пов'язані з доречністю використання контенту TED Talks, критеріями його відбору, що мають ураховувати рівень володіння іноземною мовою здобувача вищої освіти, тривалістю тематичного виступу, а також із сформованою позицією викладача, який активно впроваджує в освітній процес вивчення англійської мови ресурси TED Talks.

З'ясовано, що використання освітнього контенту TED Talks під час навчання англійської мови має низку позитивних і результативних аспектів: підвищення мотивації здобувачів до вивчення англійської мови; можливість спостереження за автентичним іншомовним мовленням; застосування техніки «Shadowing»; розширення обсягу лексикограматичного матеріалу; збагачення словникового запасу; розвиток практично всіх умінь і навичок іншомовного спілкування (від граматики і лексики до навичок критичного сприйняття інформації); самоосвіти і саморозвитку; надійний базис для формування і розвитку навчально-пізнавальної компетентності здобувача вищої освіти тощо. Доведено, що використання контенту TED Talks сприяє створенню оптимальних умов для формування в здобувачів навичок самостійної роботи та підвищення мотивації до вивчення англійської мови.

Результати дослідження та висновки авторів можуть бути використані для розроблення навчально-методичних матеріалів на основі роботи з ресурсами TED Talks для організації аудиторної роботи здобувачів вищої освіти та насамперед самостійного опрацювання

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іншомовного контенту.

*Ключові слова:* ступінь вищої освіти бакалавр; іншомовна мовленнєва компетентність; мотивація; самостійна робота; національна система освіти; ресурси TED Talks.

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